

IOWA CHILD ADVOCACY BOARD  
STATE BOARD MEETING  
Conference Room 319  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa  
Friday, March 13, 2020  
12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

State Board Members Present:

Rachel Cadena  
Courtney Clarke  
Marc Elcock  
Beth Myers  
Michael Steele

Staff Present:

Amy Carpenter  
Shirley Hoefer - Phone  
Sherri Ripperger  
Steffani Simbric  
Jennifer Slife - Phone

Guests Present:

Elizabeth A. Varnon

Call Meeting to Order; Roll Call of Board Members

Myers calls the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. with a quorum present.

Approval of Minutes for Previous Meetings

Handout 0. Clarke moves and Cadena seconds a motion to approve the December 2019 Iowa Child Advocacy Board meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Friends of CASA and ICFCRB Report, Elizabeth Varnon

The Friends Board approved and passed their 2020-2025 Strategic Plan at their February meeting. The new

Strategic Plan is focusing more on fundraising and marketing. They want to get as many people to their events as possible. Friends will be working on new committees and what each committee's duties and responsibilities are. They would like each board member to be on at least one committee. They are also looking at long term giving and increasing donations through other means. They are hopeful that over the next five years they will be able to hire an assistant for Tim Pearson, Executive Director. Friends is checking into hiring a Fiscal Agent or another means of doing their books.

The Des Moines Light of Hope will be delayed. Varnon will be emailing out a calendar with updated upcoming events. They are looking at a couple other options for fundraising this year.

Clarke asks if the financial portion of the Friends Strategic Plan lines up with ICAB's new strategic plan. Varnon states they do align. Varnon will submit an annual report this fall.

#### Management Report, Steffani Simbric

Handout 1. Based on what we are projecting our expense to be, we feel that we should be okay this year. We are still working through the revenue. Although we have several revenue strands, some of them are earmarked for specific activities. At this time, we are a little bit ahead on our IV-E revenue projections. We will continue to keep a close eye on this year's budget.

Cadena asked when we will know about the Cedar Rapids United Way Grant. Slife states that we should know sometime in May. Cadena also states that she and Jennifer Gericke talked about sending volunteers to the National CASA Conference. Simbric states that at this time we are not authorized to travel out of state. She also states that there is no money in the state budget to cover those costs. Coordinators are able to use their local Friends account to send volunteers to the National CASA Conference once the travel ban is lifted.

Simbric will work on finding more state dollars for travel for FY21. She states that we have started working on the FY21 budget. She anticipates we will have a pretty significant shortfall. Friends is unable to commit to any money for next year. She has a long-term goal of using future Friends money for one time projects instead of salaries. Clarke states that we put effort into grant writing and asked about the outcome. Simbric states that we have submitted four grants for approximately \$430,000. We do not know yet if we are funded. We have to wait to see what is funded and what we are allowed to spend the money on.

Simbric states that the history of ICAB's budget is going into the new fiscal year in a deficit. She doesn't feel like we can ever grow if we are constantly trying to catch up.

Cadena asks if there are any potential cuts to the General Appropriation. Simbric says that the proposal from the Governor's office shows a \$43,000 increase to help offset the cost of the COLA raises of 2.1%. The increase doesn't cover all COLA raise costs or annual raises. Part of what we are working though is our relationship with Friends because a lot of grants are run through Friends.

There was a short discussion about IT problems and costs. There may be some significant costs to get ICAB up to par. Computer leases are up in March, but she wants the network issues fixed before getting new computers.

#### FCRB Program Report, Shirley Hoefer

Handout 2. We are holding steady with the number of reviews conducted. The FCRB committee has been brainstorming on ways to get more interested party participation. During the months of March and April all of the local board members are getting a refresher training on their role in reviewing case permanency plans. This should help us make findings, identify barriers and make more effective recommendations. They are also getting started with developing and implementing an annual FCRB evaluation process. Anyone involved in the process will be invited to complete a survey which will then be compiled for the annual evaluation. Also included in the annual evaluation will be comment card responses, survey results, data on time spent in foster care placement and data on systemic barriers.

In January 2020, Hoefer joined the DHS Social Work Administrator's at their monthly meeting. They discussed the definition of a child in foster care eligible for a citizen foster care review. Clarke asked how the definition changed. Hoefer states we no longer will be reviewing children placed with non-licensed relatives as they are not included in code definition 237.15. We are starting to see less kids in foster care, therefore there aren't as many cases to review. Because numbers are going down, we are looking at places where we could pick up other counties and review kids in foster care. Hoefer reviews her chart of recommended expansion. Clarke moves and Elcock seconds a motion to establish local citizen foster care reviews for Floyd, Jasper and adding one more board in Linn County. Motion passed unanimously.

Joy Geer, CASA Advocate, and the late Judge Witt were interested in establishing a pilot FCRB for Polk County. Polk County has 686 children in foster care. Hoefer would like to gather information and have preliminary conversations on what it would take to get a pilot FCRB started in Polk County.

Clarke moves and Steele seconds a motion to explore establishing a pilot local citizen review board in Polk County. Motion passed unanimously.

#### CASA Program Report, Amy Carpenter

Handout 3. There was an increase in CASA applications in October and November, due to a branding and marketing campaign from National CASA. Today we applied for another branding and marketing grant with National CASA so we can rejuvenate CASA in 17 rural areas. We have good relationships and cases in these counties, but not enough advocates to be assigned to the cases.

The number of adjudications around the state are going down considerably. With Families First they are providing more of the funding on the front end with families to keep children in the home or with family. Some of the rural areas are seeing an increase in adjudications. Carpenter is paying very close attention to

how this is looking.

Carpenter states the CASA P & P will more than likely be updated in September instead of June. National CASA has released new State and Local Standards that we will incorporate into our P & P. One of the changes is enforcing continuing education hours with our advocates. Advocates need 12 hours per year. Even though the standards haven't changed drastically, there are a few that will really impact the way we do business. Clarke asked what percentage of volunteers do not meet the continuing education hours. Carpenter states that 48 out of the 330 advocates completed 12 hours in the past year. Over 100 advocates had no training hours in CAMS. Of the 330 advocates with training hours, the majority (over 280) had anywhere from 1 to 11 hours entered.

ICAB received a Professional Development grant from National CASA. We were awarded \$7,749. Carpenter's focus for the rest of FY20 is the Coach Engagement Project and Staff Delineation of Duties Project. She is also working on the new state and local organization standards from National CASA.

#### ICAB Strategic Plan Update, Shirley Hoefer & Steffani Simbric

Handout 4. As ICAB management talked through the plan that is in place, they thought there were a few things they would like to rearrange. We need to fix current initiatives before we can expand. Hoefer states that the three pages in handout 4 are actually the strategic plan. The other actions steps and ideas that were generated through the strategic planning process will still be used by our staff to create the operational plan. Hoefer reviewed the changes that are in blue. Simbric wants to make sure our goals are clear and we know what we are striving for. She feels our goal for funding during FY21 will be about current operations and getting what we have stabilized. Clarke asks what amount of money we need to stabilize operations for FY21. Simbric states that we need an additional \$300-\$350,000. Cadena would like to see a list of priorities; when we want to get it done and how much it's going to cost. Simbric states that there is nothing on the FY21 budget that we can cut.

Clarke recommends adding the word "expand" under Goal 4, 2nd Outcome Measure (Increase and expand...).

Steele moves and Clarke seconds a motion to approve the changes to the FY 2020-2024 ICAB Strategic Plan. Motion passed unanimously.

Simbric is thinking about our current needs, not necessarily future needs. Regarding legislative advocacy, she would like to talk about how we move forward with a joint initiative to get a plan together for next year. Clarke feels like in the past there wasn't a clear plan to help advocates talk to their legislatures. She would like to know what we are asking for, what are the key metrics we need to be communicating and why we are asking for these things. When asked who would like to participate in this initiative Elcock, Clarke and Myers volunteered.

Simbric states she and Slife have worked on several grants. Clarke asked if applications for current operations

are looked upon less favorably than future projects. Simbric feels there isn't a difference. Simbric wanted the board to review the goal tenders and to be sure they are willing to work on the goal they were assigned to. Cadena would like to be assigned to Partnerships & Public Awareness and Volunteer Engagement.

#### New Business

Simbric states we will be putting out some formal communication regarding the coronavirus. Staff is not allowed to travel unless it's mandatory. We have canceled fostering futures training and two Module 4-5 trainings from now through April. We cannot put out any official communication without it being approved through the Governor's office. We just received word that our document is ready to send out to staff and volunteers.

National CASA approved an exception for advocates not seeing the children in person. They can do it virtually or over the phone instead. If the advocate feels comfortable, they can still visit the child in person. All next week's FCRB reviews will be rescheduled for another date. Hoefer states they are looking at doing paper reviews so they can continue to do the reviews.

Amy Carpenter received a Leadership Development certificate during the meeting.

#### Review of Future Meeting Dates

Next meeting scheduled for Friday, June 12th from 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Lucas Building Rooms 319 & 320.

Clarke motions and Cadena seconds the meeting adjourned. Meeting adjourns 2:15 p.m.

#### Future Meeting Dates

Next meeting scheduled for Friday, June 12th from 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Lucas Building Rooms 319 & 320.

ICAB Minutes Prepared By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sherri Ripperger

ICAB Minutes Approved On:

CAB Minutes Approved by Child Advocacy Board Vote

Approved By:

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Beth Myers, ICAB State Board Chair

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Steffani Simbric, ICAB Administrator

Exhibit 0: December 2019 Board Minutes

Exhibit 1: Budget Report

Exhibit 2: FCRB Program Status Report

Exhibit 3: CASA Program Status Report

Exhibit 4: ICAB Strategic Plan